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“THE FAITH OF JESUS CHRIST.”

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PAUL carefully discriminates between “faith in Christ” and “the faith of Christ.” The former he regards as the conscious effort of the believer, the latter as the spontaneous utterance of the indwelling Christ. These contrasted points of view are clearly marked by the sequence of thought in Gal. 2:16:

“A man is not justified by the works of the law,
but by the faith of Jesus Christ;
we have believed in Jesus Christ,
that we might be justified by the faith of Christ.”

Paul here attributes justification to a faith that works through but does not originate with man. Faith viewed merely as a conclusion of the intellect or a voluntary act of the will might be regarded as a “work of the law.” Guarding against this misconception, Paul contrasts with “works of the law” “the faith of Jesus Christ,” instead of using an expression emphasizing the human element in faith. But lest this faith should be supposed quite independent of the believer’s coöperation, he immediately adds: “We have believed in Jesus Christ.” Yet again to avoid the ascription of faith exclusively to the human initiative he continues (paraphrasing): This belief of ours is not a mere product of human volition, but the act of Christ in us “that we might be justified by the faith of Christ.” With Paul, then, faith is the synthesis of Christ’s gift and man’s effort.

In the following verses, especially v. 20, the apostle consistently with the above conclusion presents Christ as the one who “loved me,” “gave himself for me,” “liveth in me,” and thus impels me to ascribe my life to “the faith of the Son of God,” fitly called elsewhere “the author and finisher of our faith.”

The Jesus of the evangelists evoked the faith of his disciples

by his miraculous power as healer or wonder-worker, by the appeal to Messianic prophecy, by the authority and self-evidencing excellence of his teaching, by the attraction of his marvelous love for the lost.

In those who know Jesus only through the gospels and the historic effects of his teachings faith is similarly aroused. With Paul, however, this is but the starting point of faith, and that as proximate and not ultimate cause. With him faith passes into a union with Christ, mystical but not vague, vital and not formal, permanently sustained by the living Christ, not dependent wholly on man's fitful purpose.

Yet Paul fully recognizes both in Gal. 2:16-20 and elsewhere the human element in faith. To the jailor he says: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," calling on him to heed the testimony of a miracle and initiate by his own act a life of dependence on Jesus for salvation. So also he describes faith in Rom. 4:5; 9:13; 10:11, 14; Acts 13:39; 22:19; 1 Tim. 1:16. It is to be noted, however, that in these passages he either distinctly refers to the beginning (chronologically, not logically, considered) of the Christian life in the uninitiated or else describes its foundation in faith, considering the agent rather than the author, the result rather than the operation of faith.

But when Paul dwells upon the origin of faith or its relation to the development of the spiritual life he is wont to ascribe it to Christ rather than the believer. Thus in eight instances he uses the phrase "the faith of Jesus Christ," or its equivalent (Rom. 3:22; Gal. 2:16; 3:22; Phil. 3:9; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 4:13; Rom. 3:26; Eph. 3:12).

Paul's dogmatic teaching elsewhere concerning faith quite accords with the use of this expression, *e. g.*, Eph. 2:8, "not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;" 6:23, "faith from . . . the Lord Jesus Christ;" Rom. 12:3, "God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith;" 1 Cor. 12:9, "faith by the same spirit;" Gal. 5:22, "fruit of the spirit is faith;" Rom. 10:17, "faith should stand in the power of God." *Cf.* also 1 Tim. 1:14; 3:12; 2 Tim. 1:13; 3:15.

Similarly Paul attributes to sovereign grace, "peace" (Eph.

6:23), "hope" (Gal. 5:5), "love" (Rom. 5:5), indeed the whole cycle of Christian excellences (Gal. 5:22; 1 Cor. 12:4-11).

"Yea, every virtue they possess,
And every conquest won,
And every thought of holiness
Are His and His alone."

If we turn to the gospels for confirmation of this doctrine, we must not expect to find the same fulness of teaching in Jesus as in Paul. Our Lord spoke to beginners chiefly, while the apostle wrote to those who were somewhat advanced in the Christian life and were, moreover, living under the dispensation of the Holy Spirit. Yet a gleam of this truth appears in Mark 11:22 (literally: "Have faith of God"). Here Jesus is plainly directing Peter's thought from the inadequate struggle of human faith to the faith of God which accomplishes the impossible, not only without us, but, if we will, through us.

If this interpretation is correct, we may not dispense with the historical basis of faith and individual initiative as some do, nor, as is more often the case, may we rest alone in the historical knowledge of Christ. It is the natural impulse of the Christian heart to crave the real presence of Christ. This it seeks in the beginning by objectifying through the pictorial imagination the Jesus of the gospels. By conscious effort of the will he is directly presented to the mind in prayer, praise and work. But doubts arise in the devout yet thoughtful mind, so completely is such a faith the echo of one's own wish and will. Christ's presence seems a vaguely recalled memory rather than a self-evidencing fact. The logical, too often the actual, outcome of such doubts is to reduce the Christian life to an attempt to reproduce in modern life merely the ethics of Jesus. Such terms as "Communion," "Guidance," "Enduement" cease to be descriptions of actual transactions with a living Lord.

The faith of Jesus in his Father was no such vague supposition grounded on a narrow margin of possible facts. Like ours his faith doubtless had its historical origin in his religious training, his knowledge of Messianic prophecy, the early intimations of his heart that he was, perchance, the Promised One. Granting this and nothing more we can hardly explain how his

faith reached that magnificent assurance of unique sonship, that unquestioning confidence in the absolute truth and authority of its teachings, that unparalleled power to mould the perfect life and dictate the complete sacrifice of Jesus.

Martineau was unable to believe that Jesus really thought himself the Messiah. Such a self-assumed claim seemed to him inconsistent with the humility of Jesus. This conviction and assertion that he was the "Son of God" is indeed an assumption all too divine for even the holiest man to make of his own notion. Acquaintance with God leads to profoundest acknowledgment of our ignorance of his ways, our insufficiency to reveal him. It is therefore startling to find this rule so completely reversed in Jesus. "As the Father knoweth me and I know the Father;" "I and my Father are one;" "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." In view of such statements it is necessary either to deny that Jesus used them in a more than figurative sense, or else to regard the faith of Jesus in his Father as a divinely implanted and sustained faith that overcame the natural modesty of a sensitive and humble soul and against all human evidence impelled him to believe in and assert unqualifiedly his divine sonship. Indeed there is perhaps nothing which Jesus more strenuously maintained than just this—that his faith and life were the spontaneous work of the Father in him. "I am not come of myself;" "He that sent me is with me;" "I live by the Father;" "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me;" "I do always those things that please him;" "My doctrine is not mine but his that sent me;" "I can do nothing of myself; the Father that dwelleth in me doeth the works."

In Gal. 2:16–20 Paul passes from "belief in Christ" to "the faith of Christ" and thence to the indwelling life of Christ. These transitions are not clearly defined in our Saviour's relation to his Father. It would seem that he had from his early years the perfect faith of the matured Christian. This need not prevent us from thinking of his faith as brought to consciousness by historical and rational grounds similar to those which give rise to our own faith in God. From his earliest teaching in the temple to the last when the "voice from Heaven" authenticated

his message, there was a various and progressive unfolding of of his faith. Yet the boy of twelve about his Father's business exhibits not the uncertain faith of the beginner in the divine life, but the unqualified, albeit undeveloped, faith of the "only begotten of the Father."

With us, however, faith in Jesus Christ, so far as it does not rest directly on the authority of parent or teacher, begins with the assent of the mind to the historical probability of his resurrection. The next step, perhaps, is an awakening conviction of his divinity based upon the moral excellence of his teaching and especially the attempt to enshrine it in one's life. From this it is easy to rise to a comparatively strong assurance of his living presence. Through some such course of thought, varying in the order and nature of the successive steps, one comes to that advanced stage of the Christian life where faith is less exertion than submission, where it is better described as a gift than an acquirement, as the life of Jesus rather than one's own.

In this culmination of faith "he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit" (1 Cor. 6:17). It is this unity that enables Paul to speak with equal facility of the operation of the divine or the human will in faith. Thus he says to Timothy (2 Tim. 1:5, 6): "When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee . . . I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God that is within thee." This passage is pregnant with meaning, describing Timothy's faith as the blending of heredity, grace and personal effort. The phrase "gift of God" may not refer primarily here to faith, but a comparison with 1 Tim. 4:14; 1:18, 19 ("holding faith"); 1:5, "the end of the charge is in faith unfeigned," will not fail to show that Paul is here ascribing a divine origin to faith and in the same breath urging personal effort as its fittest complement.

Faith in Christ is, then, neither wholly ethical nor mystical. Evoked by authority, confirmed by reason, "working by love," it becomes a life from God in which there are but two pulsations; the one Christ revealing himself, the other the believer, confessing Christ. "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." This is the faith of Jesus Christ—*his* faith and *therefore* ours.